

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended): A niobium powder having a nitrogen content of at least about 500 ppm by weight and not more than about 7,000 ppm by weight, and having a mean particle diameter of at least about 0.2 μm and less than about 3 μm , which contains as impurity at least one element M selected from the group consisting of iron, nickel, cobalt, silicon, sodium, potassium and magnesium in an amount such that each element M is not more than 100 ppm by weight, and

wherein the niobium powder has a CV value of from 89,600 ~~(CV/g)~~ $\mu\text{FV/g}$ to 194,000 ~~(CV/g)~~ $\mu\text{FV/g}$.

2. (original): The niobium powder according to claim 1, which has a mean particle diameter of at least about 0.5 μm and less than about 2 μm .

3. (original): The niobium powder according to claim 1, which has a nitrogen content of at least about 1,000 ppm by weight and not more than about 3,000 ppm by weight.

4-20. (canceled).